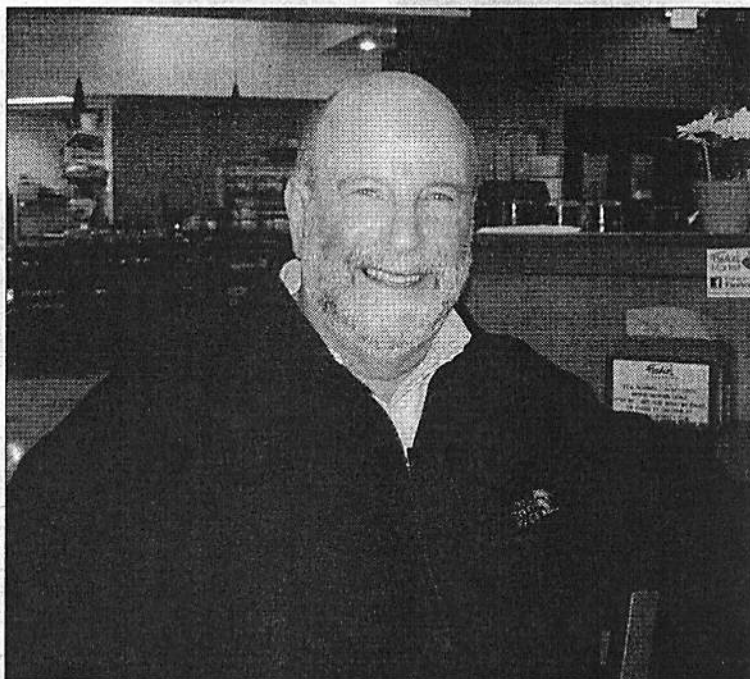


# A visit with Harry Katz

Recent volunteer of the year winner discusses work with the Interfaith Council

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Duxbury's Interfaith Council, according to Harry Katz, is "a fabulous organization made up of almost all the congregations in the community. We try to educate each other about our differences and ways to work together, show compassion, and bring the community together in a religious way..." Fresh off his win as Duxbury's Volunteer of the Year, Katz sat down with us and it became quite clear why he was the recipient of such a distinguished title.



Harry Katz has been involved with the Duxbury Interfaith Council and No Place for Hate for years. He recently received the Community Volunteer of the Year award from The Village.

## THE KATZ FILE

**Favorite Book:** I read newspapers and magazines. If I had to pick one author it would be John Irving.

**Favorite Movie:** "The Graduate" and "The World According to Garp."

**Hobby:** Skiing, and the IFC.

**Family:** Wife, Wendy, 4 children, 3 grandchildren and 1 on the way.

**Pet Peeve:** Bad service.

**When was the council formed and how many members are there?** As far as we can tell, the history goes back about 75 years. 1970 was when they first put in records to the state. We have 13 member congregations, including the Muslim and Baha' i families. There is generally one clergy member and three laity from every congregation.

## How did you get involved?

I was very active in the initial years of Congregation Shirat Hayam here in town. After my involvement with getting that up and running, I felt a really strong need to educate the community about Judaism. That is probably still my main mission — to show everyone that different faiths can work together and coexist.

## Can you explain the IFC's various programs?

First, we have a strong outreach committee; we assist approximately 100 families in need, in a number of ways. We do it first in food and fuel assistance, rent, food vouchers, anything to get people in need the basic necessities of life. We also put together and give holiday baskets three times per year.

Secondly we have our TLC program and camperships. The TLC (teach, learn, care) program provides backpacks and back to school supplies to approximately 50 children. Our campership program sends about 40-50 children to summer camp, who would other-

wise not have the opportunity.

And finally, we have our No Place for Hate committee. This is something I have particular pride in because I started it in Duxbury. The Anti Defamation League approached us after a particular hate crime here in 2000. We were one of the first of 13 towns to be certified for No Place for Hate. NPFH is empowered to educate the community about diversities and to do everything possible to end hate and bigotry. I am actually now in charge of the entire New England chapter, which is very exciting for me.

**Has Duxbury been supportive of the council's mission?** One hundred percent, and we are very, very thankful for that. We have a huge group of volunteers who make it all happen. We couldn't do it otherwise.

**What has been the biggest challenge the council has faced thus far?** The recession has been a challenge because the need for outreach has increased. Back in the '90s we always had a "slush fund," that disappeared in the early 2000s and we never really recovered from that. But, all we have to do is ask and the community is so amazing, they just give.

**Do other towns have interfaith councils?** We don't know of any other town that does what we do; we are a model for other town pro-

grams. I really believe we are unique in what we do; we are a very special entity.

**Is there any emphasis on or involvement in world religious issues?** Yes. When 9/11 occurred we led a large town vigil, and we are also currently planning the 10th anniversary memorial. We also had a candlelight vigil when the war in Afghanistan started.

**Has there been anyone particularly inspiring you've met through the council?** A woman by the name of Torey Andrade. She was a victim of a terrible hate crime in the Myles Standish State Forest six years ago. She was from this area originally and was back on vacation. After hearing of the event I called her, thinking I would leave a voicemail and hear nothing back. She returned my call half an hour later. We got her help through the ADL and went to court with her when her perpetrators were tried, which was quite an experience — being in the presence of these people of hate. I got to know Torey extremely well; she opened my eyes to how hurtful hate can be.

**Do you think young people today are more open minded about religion?** Tough question. I think they are more open minded about interfaith. I think we've done a great job in Duxbury to do that.